

MEDICAL MARIJUANA/CANNABIS TASK FORCE

MEETING SUMMARY FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2004

EXECUTIVE COMPLEX - 5TH FLOOR 1010 SECOND AVENUE

For Information contact Ed Plank (236-6433).

Attendees:

The following Task Force members were in attendance: Chair: Jerry Meier, St. Clair Adams, Michael Bartelmo, Mike Barbee, Larry Chaidez, Juliana Humphrey, Ann Shanahan-Walsh.

Staff present were Staajabu Heshimu, Ed Plank and Lt. Cesar Solis.

Report from the Chair

Jerry Meier reported that a letter was sent to Nancy Bowen, Acting Director of the County's Health and Human Services. The letter summarized the City's involvement in the medical cannabis issue, invited the County to send a representative to the Task Force's monthly meetings and requested that the County include Task Force representatives in any group or committee they form to oversee the County's development and implementation of the Verification Card Program required by SB420.

Jerry also distributed a draft Status Report to Task Force members which summarized key milestones in the Task Force efforts. Preparation of a status report had been discussed at the last meeting. Task Force members made a number of suggestions regarding additional language, clarifications, etc.

Attorney General Request

Ed mentioned that Lisa Foster had been unable to work on the correspondence to the State Attorney General because of her involvement in a lawsuit filed against the City right before the holidays.

The Task Force discussed some additional questions they would like posed to the State:

1. Does the State have the right to not fund and not implement the program? There were concerns over the priority that the State would give this program given the current State budget difficulties.
2. Request for State Health Dept to justify the cost estimates they have projected for this program and explain why the program is not being pursued.
3. Ask the County to describe their plans for implementation, and if they have no plans, why not.... there was uncertainty over whether this question should be posed to the Health Dept or County Counsel

Larry Chaidez pointed out the County distinguishes between mandated programs and 'necessary' programs, and indicated he saw nothing in the County budget for I.D. card implementation.

The Chair mentioned the need for working through Assembly woman Kehoe's Office to get some answers. Juliana stated that questions need to be directed at both the Attorney General and the State Health Department.

Subcommittee Reports

Ann Shanahan-Walsh mentioned that sample letters for physicians should be provided on the City website. Juliana commented that there were a couple version of the letters available. There were comments that the letters needed to specify dosages. Anyone having versions of the letters was asked to provide to Jerry or Ed. There were comments about whether the City could/should put the forms on the website, and if they were included they should be clearly labeled as 'SAMPLES'... Ed to discuss with Lisa Foster.

There were requests from Task Force members to update and restructure the City website. Suggested restructuring included grouping information of interest for Doctors, Patients/Caregivers and General Information. Ed to set up meeting of interested Task Force members and staff from Community Development to discuss feasibility of website update and overhaul given no budget for the effort.

Mike Barbee proposed developing a mechanism for patient feedback to collect information on use of medical cannabis and interaction with law enforcement, perhaps to be distributed by PD. Concerns were raised that PD may not be the appropriate staff to obtain this data, also that this went beyond the mandates of the Task Force as directed by the City Council.

New Business

A memo was written to the Chief of Police from Council Members Atkins and Zucchet regarding clarification of the PD policy regarding participation in Federal drug enforcement activities. Cesar Solis stated that a response had been prepared and gave an overview indicating the City would not knowingly participate in any federal operations involving medical cannabis users. A copy of the final Police Department response is attached. It was requested that an update from the Police Department be included on a future Task Force agenda.

Jerry commented on the uncertainty of funding for the City verification card program given adoption of the State legislation. Potential contributors for the City Program are now rescinding offers based on the State Law requiring the County to act.

A proposal was made to discontinue regular monthly meetings of the Task Force given the need for clarification of the State/County intentions. This generated considerable discussion. A concern was raised that monthly meetings were necessary to pursue additional patient and caregiver initiatives. A motion was made to change to a quarterly meeting schedule but did not carry based on a vote of 3 in favor, 3 opposed and 1 abstention.

The Task Force was reminded that the Council asked for an update on the program 6 months after passage of the Municipal Code Amendments regarding the Possession and Cultivation guidelines in September, 2003. This timing would involve an update to Council in late March or April. Task Force members were asked to identify topics they would like included in the report. Examples mentioned included stats on medical cannabis interactions involving Police Officers, funding information, as well as uncertainty of the State/County plan for SB420 implementation, and the implications for the status of the City's Ordinance and Verification Card program.

Public Comment

- Question whether subcommittee meetings must be posted
- Comment expressing dissatisfaction with Task Force actions, issues with Police interactions with Federal drug enforcement activities in the past. Noted there is a piece of legislation calling for clarification of SB420
- Suggestion for refinement of Q&A section on website, include link to California Medical Association website
- Medical Cannabis user expressed interest in becoming more involved
- Speaker endorsed restructuring of the City Website
- Suggestion to collect feedback via the website on patient testimonials, etc.
- Suggestion for alternative meeting times, post meeting times on the website